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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a training program for college outdoor program leaders developed by the Outdoor Action Program at Princeton University (New Jersey). The training program includes a leader training course, a safety management seminar, a wilderness first aid course, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and group skills workshop. This paper describes in detail the leader training course (LTC), which trains new leaders through a wilderness educational experience. The LTC is divided into three sections: pretrip; trip; and posttrip. The course is constructed so that each participant is responsible for teaching certain skills to the rest of the group. After each teaching session, feedback is given to the person teaching. Groups meet 5 weeks prior to the trip in order to begin pretrip planning. A chart detailing pretrip and trip sessions is included. Two accident simulations and a lost-person simulation are performed on the trip to teach participants technical and emotional leadership skills required in such situations. Appropriate walkouts by the guides on the last day of the trip give the trainees the experience of being completely in charge of a trip. Daily debriefing is done to check on how the day went, how people are feeling, and what they have learned. Participants evaluate themselves and leaders give both verbal and written evaluations concerning the participants' performances. Recommendations for improvement are provided. (LP)

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Training College Outdoor Program Leaders

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This paper has been abbreviated from the original manuscript.
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Introduction

Training college outdoor program leaders is a study in balances. In many cases, these leaders are not paid staff which places them in the category of paraprofessionals. As paraprofessionals, they cannot be expected to have the level of training that a professional outdoor educator such as a NOLS or OB instructor would have. At the same time, these paraprofessional leaders may be required to deal with the same types of problems on the trail. A bee sting or lightning storm along the Appalachian Trail in New Jersey can be just as dangerous as in the middle of the Wind River Range. Finding the balance for what college outdoor program leaders should know and what they can realistically be required to learn is a challenge for all college programs. Each school must evaluate the types of trips it offers, skills level required, and the feasibility of a training program.

Training Priorities

The material that follows is the model developed by the Outdoor Action Program (OA) at Princeton University over the last eleven years. Outdoor Action operates a number of wilderness programs including a 6-day wilderness pre-orientation program for incoming students, as well as day and multi-day trips throughout the academic year. Leadership training priorities for such a program include the following:

- Wilderness Skills
- Safety Management
- First Aid & Emergency Procedures
- Group Dynamics

Outdoor Action Leader Training Program

The OA Leader Training Program is one of three components of the overall OA Program which also includes a frosh wilderness orientation trip and trips during the academic year. The goals of the Leader Training Program are to develop leadership skills and to generate new staff. OA has 80-100 students participate in the Leader Training Program each year. Some complete the program and do not lead any trips and some students do not complete all the training segments. Merely completing the requirements does not automatically allow one to lead trips. Students are evaluated at several points through the training process and given guidance if they need additional skill building. Also, new leaders are generally paired with students who have led before, providing an additional "apprenticeship" for a new leader.

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OA requires all prospective leaders, even skilled outdoors persons like OB and NOLS graduates, to complete all aspects of the Leader Training Program. This assures us that all leaders have a certain minimum level of skill and understanding of OA's procedures and practices. It also allows us to evaluate all prospective leaders. We find that the number of requirements helps to select out those who have strong interests in the program. Still, all students who participate in the many aspects of the Leader Training Program feel they benefit and the skills are useful throughout their college years and beyond. This approach differs from that at some schools where potential leaders go through an application and selection process similar to Resident Advisor Programs and then are trained at one time each year.

The Outdoor Action Leader Training Program consists of five different training segments. These are offered several times each semester to allow all students to work the trainings into their University schedule. The five-part training program developed by the Outdoor Action Program is outlined below and the first segment (leader training course) is covered in detail, as an example, in the section that follows.

- Leader Training Course
- Safety Management Seminar
- Wilderness First Aid Course
- CPR
- Group Skills Workshop

Since OA Leaders go through the training program only once (they do have to keep CPR and first aid current), we also try to provide refresher programs during the year. This program is still under development and our work to date is presented below. OA also has an extensive Leader's Manual that serves as an excellent reference for leaders to polish their skills.

Outdoor Action Leader Training Course Guidelines

This section is taken from the Outdoor Action Leader's Manual.

Philosophy

The Leader Training Course is a fundamental part of the OA Program. It serves two purposes; to train new leaders and it stands on its own as a wilderness educational experience. This dual purpose is reflected in the complex nature of leading such a trip. First, there is a strong focus on skill training for the participants so that they will have solid skills for when they lead their own trips. In addition, this may be the first OA trip for participants, so they need to go through an experience similar to what their future participants will go through. Just as on a regular OA trip, it is important to share the leadership responsibility with the participants. As they learn more about how to function in the wilderness environment, more responsibility is shifted to them by the leaders.

Goals

The goal of the Leader Training Course (LTC) is to teach the requisite outdoor and trip planning skills to allow interested persons to lead Outdoor Action trips. Some of the skills are well-defined and easily grasped, such as lighting a stove. Others are much more abstract, involving simultaneous

application of principles, equipment, and the confidence born of experience, such as successfully dealing with accidents and injuries. The learning of either type of skill is a matter of two ingredients: instruction and practice. On the LTC, instruction is given in all aspects of trip leadership: background information as well as hard skills. Instruction is given not only by the leader trainers, but also the participants, each of whom will research and teach a class to the whole group. The course is designed as an opportunity to learn and practice the leadership tasks performed on a regular OA 3-season backpacking trip. In order to facilitate learning, a small group is required; the LTC will consist of eight participants and two leaders. The Leader Training Course covers the basic skills necessary to lead 3-season backpacking trips. A Bike Touring Leader Training Course is also offered to teach the skills necessary to lead multi-day bike touring trips (See OA Bike Leaders Manual). The LTC is divided into three sections - Pre-trip, Trip, and Post-trip.

Teaching

An important part of the learning process for participants is learning how to teach. This is an essential skill for them to be effective leaders. The Leader Training Course is constructed so that each participant will be responsible for teaching certain skills to the rest of the group. Skills to be taught will be divided up between those which will be taught pre-trip and those which will be taught during the trip. All pre-trip material will be taught by the Leader Trainers to effectively transmit the information and to model effective teaching styles. The other material will be assigned to participants. After each teaching session (including those done by the Leader Trainers) there will be a group debriefing to give feedback to the person teaching and to reinforce the importance of good teaching. This is a skill which will also be evaluated on the Evaluation Form (see below). During the trip, participants will teach specific aspects of their subject taken from general topic outlines (see below). In some cases, some parts of the topic will be taught by the leader trainers.

Pre-Trip

Groups will meet 5 weeks prior to the trip in order to begin pre-trip planning. Participants are required to attend all group meetings and prepare material for the class they will teach during the trip. Material for the classes will be taken from the *OA Leader's Manual*, the *NOLS Wilderness Guide*, and other sources as needed. The first and last meetings before the trip itself will be run just like a regular OA backpacking trip pre-trip meeting would be run. This is designed to model how the future leaders would run their own trip.

Classes

Each participant will have one class to prepare prior to the trip. An outline of the basic skills the participant will cover must be given to the Leader Trainers before the trip leaves. During the trip each participant will teach his/her class. After any class is presented, the Leader Trainers should round it out with whatever they have learned out on the trail. Then the group should discuss and critique both the content and the presentation. This is not a test, but rather, an opportunity for helpful feedback. Possible areas for review include, clarity, confidence, creativity, and the ability to hold listeners' interest. Route planning for the trip should include setting aside about 2 hours each day for classes.

Schedule of Pre-Trip Sessions

The schedule for the pre-trip sessions is detailed in Chart 1. The schedule for classes and activities during the week is detailed in Chart 2. Participants are assigned their class from the topics in Chart 2.

CHART 1

PRE-TRIP ACTIVITIES		
Meeting	**Classes**	**Other Tasks**
First	Dressing for the Backcountry	Explain OA priorities/goals and how Leader Training Course will operate. Hand out participant applications, Leader's Manuals, and Personal Equipment List. Sign out NOLS Wilderness Guides. Collect trip payment. Participants will be assigned classes. Schedule remaining meetings a d decide on due date for class outlines. Read OA Policies and Leader Training Chapter in Leader's Manual for the next meeting.
Second	Route Planning Teaching a Skills MSR Stove Class Knot Class - round turn with two half hitches	Tour of Equipment Room. Plan route as a group (needs maps & route plan form).
Third	Food & Menu Planning First Aid & Blister Kits Optimus 111 Stove Class Knot Class - Trucker's Hitch	Check food room for stocks. Tarp set up.
Fourth	General Minimal Impact Class Peak 1 Stove Class Knot Class - Bowline	Assemble group equipment.
Day before trip	Backpack Class - sizing, wearing, loading	Group Games. Practice tent set up. Review of equipment and food lists - prepare shopping list and buy items. Repack food. Distribute group equipment. Issue personal equipment. Pack backpacks.

During The Trip

First Day

The first day should be planned such that the group sets up camp after only 1/2 day of hiking. The Leader Trainers will serve as Leaders-of-the-Day (LD's) (see below). They should inform the group that they will lead the first day just like the first day any OA trip should be led. Before starting off, while the group is stretching, trail technique, minimal impact while hiking, and the schedule for water and sit-down breaks should be mentioned. Leaders-of-the-day (LD's) for tomorrow chosen.

Leaders-of-the-Day (LD's)

LD pairs or trios will lead the middle three days of the trip, with each pair in charge of a day from wake up to bedtime. LD's are responsible for everything as if the trip were a regular backpacking trip. This means that they are there to teach and encourage the other participants to take responsibility for running the trip. They are selected the night before by the Leader Trainers and are told how many classes to schedule the next day, and whether or not there will be a simulation.

CHART 2

DURING THE TRIP		
Day	**Person**	**Classes**
First Day	Leader Trainers	Blister Care, Water Purification, Dynamics of Accidents Model
	Leader Trainers	Trail Technique
	Leader Trainers	Terrain Association
	Leader Trainers	Campsite Selection
	Participant	Minimal Impact in Camp
Day	**Person**	**Classes**
Any Day	Participant	Nutrition
	Participant	Group Games
	Participant	Layering
	Participant	Map reading
	Participant	Compass Use
	Participant	Ten Essentials
	Participant	Hypothermia/Hyperthermia
	Participant	Weather & Lightning Safety
	Leader Trainers	Debriefing
	Leader Trainers	Emergency Procedures
	Leader Trainers	Lost Person Procedures
	Leader Trainers	Knot Practice
	Leader Trainers	Emergency Simulations

Second Day - Fourth Day

LD's are responsible for getting the group moving at whatever time necessary to comply with the planned route. The LD's keep track of pace, rest stops, blister checks, emotional checks, lead and sweep positions, lunch stop, coordinate breaks for teaching, and supervise campsite selection and construction. This is not to say that these two people do all these things, rather, it is their

responsibility to make sure that all of these things get done. LD's will trade off leading with map and compass. LD's are responsible for getting the group moving at whatever time necessary to comply with the planned route. It is expected that the trainees will handle all aspects of camp selection and set-up for the rest of the trip. Trainees should watch each other to make sure all things are handled properly. Leaders should perform tasks assigned to them by trainees rather than taking initiative to do things.

Evening Activities

Evening can include a wide variety of activities. The leaders should have the group evaluate the day, how things progressed, what people learned (see Debriefing below). People should critique the teaching presentations to give feedback to the presenters. Leaders need to maintain a relaxed atmosphere so that this stays low key and informative. Also, sharing previous trip experiences can be a useful experience for everyone.

Simulations

Two accident simulations and a lost person simulation will be performed on the trip (the lost person simulation is usually combined with a first aid simulation in a single scenario in which the lost person is found injured). This activity is designed to teach participants some of the technical and emotional leadership skills required in an accident or emergency situation. The first simulation is a walk through class teaching OA Emergency and Lost Person procedures. One of the Leader Trainers will announce that he/she has an injury. The other Leader Trainer will walk the group through what procedures they should follow to treat the victim, establish a camp, and send for assistance. The idea is that a low-pressure walk-through of the Emergency Procedures will imprint them far better on the participants than a confusing, high-pressure affair.

Sometime later in the trip, the second simulation should be run. The participants must be informed of the day and time of the second simulation so that constant expectation doesn't ruin the trip. The simulation should take place at the end of a day's hiking (structure the day so you have enough daylight) just before the group scouts out a campsite. This way, camp can be wholeheartedly set up as part of the simulation and a debrief of the simulation can occur over dinner. One of the LD's should be certified in first aid if possible. If not, one of the Leader Trainers can act solely as a first aider, performing first aid on the "victim" and stating medical requirements, but nothing else.

Before the simulation everyone must understand the rules: the LD's are in charge; everything is happening in real time and in the actual conditions (don't pretend it's raining); one Leader Trainer is injured and/or lost and the other is an invisible observer. Under *no* circumstances should anyone be put in actual risk. This means victims and rescuers should not get dehydrated, wet, hypothermic, etc. The observer ends the simulation at an appropriate point, typically when the party going for help starts down the trail. At that point, the Leader Trainers inspects the gear taken by the group hiking out, the first aid measures performed, the camp setup arrangements, and the group cleans up. The simulation should be debriefed soon afterwards, with each person telling what they did and saw, and what improvements might be made. The group should analyze the incident based on the Dynamics of Accidents Model and make recommendations for how it might have been prevented.

Walkouts

The purpose of a walkout is to give the trainees the experience of what it will be like to be completely in charge of a trip. It is essential, therefore, that the following policies be complied with. Walkouts should only be done on the last day of the trip when there is short mileage back to the van. Walkouts are *not* an automatic part of a Leader Training Trip. All Leader Trainers need to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the group and decide if such an exercise is appropriate. If there is bad weather or if there is a person with an illness or injury a walkout should not be done. If the accident potential is increased, Leader Trainers *must* remain with the trip. This is *required* if any of the participants have a known, serious bee sting allergy. If the Leader Trainers decide a walkout is appropriate, they should inform the group on the last night. It is recommended that the Leader Trainers get an early start out of camp the next morning before the participants break camp. A specific rendezvous time at the van the next day should be set up with the participants . If the group is more than 1 hour late, the Leader Trainers should begin basic search procedures. There should be two sets of maps available if a walkout is being considered. Both parties should have basic first aid supplies.

If a walkout is not appropriate, the Leader Trainers can tell the group that they are "ghost" participants (not really present) and will say nothing, and help with nothing unless an emergency arises. Ghosts can carry group gear it if is set aside for them by the participants, but there is no communication to the ghosts at any time.

Debriefing

Some loose form of daily debriefing should be done each night, to check on how the day went, how people are feeling, what they learned, etc. The last night of the trip (or at the end of the last day) both an individual and a group final debriefing should be done. After dinner, Leader Trainers should meet in a removed spot with each participant for 10-15 minutes to talk about what his/her expectations of the trip had been, what he/she got out of the trip, any problems he/she wants to bring up away from the rest of the group, and an assessment of his/her performance (both strengths and weaknesses). Following this, a group final debriefing should be held (see Section 9).

Post-Trip

1. When the group returns all gear should be cleaned and returned to the equipment room. Any damaged gear should be labeled and put on the work table. The ER should be left spotless!

Evaluations

1. Participants will fill out a self-evaluation form to critique themselves on their own performance and what they have learned, as well as the areas in which they feel they need additional work.

2. Both leaders will get together with each participant after the trip and give that person a verbal evaluation on their performance, strengths, and weaknesses.

3. Both leaders will cooperatively submit a written evaluation of each participant with information on overall performance, strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations regarding that person's leader qualifications.

4. Leader Trainers will administer the Post Trip Skills test to all participants. This is designed to make sure that specific skills have been mastered by the participants.

Participants will be classified on their written evaluation with one of the following definitions.

- **Leader-in-training** - Needs additional experience. List specific areas and instruct the person regarding what they need to do.
- **Assistant Leader** - skills are OK, but needs to lead with someone who has led before and has a higher level of skills. This is the usual category for people completing a Leader Training Trip.
- **Co-leader** - skills are high enough that the person can lead with another person with similar skills even if both have not led before.
- **Primary Leader** -hard and soft skills are excellent and this person is capable of leading a trip with someone who has not led before and who may need additional supervision.